

farm and home

DAIRY
HUSBANDRY
NO. 2

FACT SHEET

Judging Dairy Cattle

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Desirable dairy type is the combination of all characteristics that make an animal useful for milk production and pleasing in appearance. It is important because:

1. Good type cows stay in a herd longer than cows with serious type defects.
2. Good type adds to the sale price of both registered and grade cows.
3. The greater pride of dairymen working with good type cattle is an asset not measured in dollars. Love of good cattle is often the difference between dairy success and failure.

Practice in judging dairy cattle improves your ability to observe, analyze, and make logical decisions. Giving reasons for placing is excellent experience in organizing and presenting conclusions in a convincing manner.

To be a good judge of dairy cattle you must have a definite mental image of the ideal dairy type. Improve the image by frequent observation of the

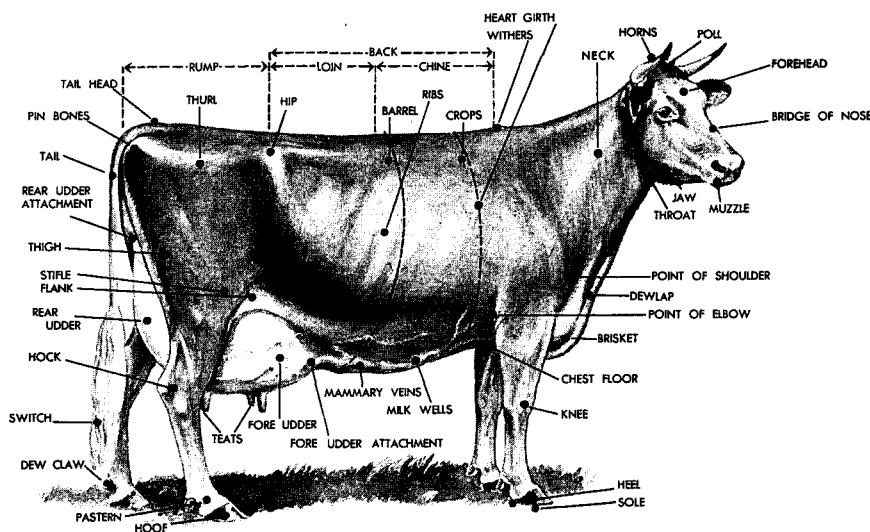
best cattle in shows, visits to outstanding herds, study of pictures in dairy breed journals, and close study of your own cattle. Use this standard of comparison for evaluating all cattle seen.

DAIRY TYPE

The Purebred Dairy Cattle Association developed a scorecard that defines the ideal dairy type according to the following divisions:

General appearance includes the balance and blending of all parts into an attractive, vigorous, alert individual. The head should be typical of the breed, clean cut, with bright eye, wide muzzle, and strong jaws. The topline should be straight from withers to pin bones. The hind legs in rear view should be perpendicular from hocks to pasterns; in side view, they should be nearly perpendicular.

Dairy character indicates the cow's ability to use her feed for milk production instead of depositing flesh on her body. Among scorecard divisions,



PARTS OF A DAIRY COW

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this characteristic is most closely related to milk production. Indications of dairy character are sharp withers, long, clean-cut neck and throat, refined flanks, and flat thighs. Ribs should be open (wide apart), flat, and long. Skin should be thin and pliable.

Body capacity indicates adequate space for the heart and lungs and for handling large amounts of feed. The chest should be deep and wide. The barrel must be deep with long, well-sprung fore and rear ribs.

The mammary system must be well attached to produce heavily for several years without becoming pendulous. The rear udder should be high and wide. The fore udder should be of moderate length and blend smoothly with the body wall. There should be moderate cleavage between the halves. The quarters should be evenly balanced. Soft, pliable udders milk out faster and are less subject to injury than large, meaty udders. Teats should be squarely placed, of uniform size, medium in length and diameter.

JUDGING DAIRY HEIFERS

Placing heifers presents some problems different from placing cows. You must try to predict the type of cow into which the heifer will grow. The very deep bodied heifer calf is often a short bodied type that develops into a small cow. A longer legged, longer bodied heifer, if she has good depth of chest and spring of rib, will usually develop depth of body as she matures. A heifer with a strong loin matures with a straight topline; weakness of loin becomes more pronounced with age. The young heifer's udder has not developed enough for accurate prediction of its future shape and attachments; however, faculty teat placements, teats too close together or fore teats too wide apart, seldom improve. Excess fatty tissue in udders from overfeeding is undesirable.

JUDGING PROCEDURES

Your first impression of an animal is often the best. Stick with it unless close inspection gives good reason to switch. If a class has an easy top or bottom, recognize it. Then, spend your time on the more difficult placings.

Observe walking animals for general appearance. Check for straightness of topline, strength of udder attachments and legs. Front view shows width of chest. Rear view shows withers, spring of ribs, rump width, and rear udder attachments.

Dairy character is usually the deciding factor of close pairs. If the two are equal in dairy character, udders usually determine the placing. Milking cows are placed over dry cows of equal merit.

Permanent lameness or a blind quarter drops a cow to the bottom of the class. Serious discrimination is given to udders with broken attachments. Small size, light quarters, parrot jaws, and winged shoulders receive slight to serious discrimination, depending upon their severity. Temporary or minor injuries receive only slight discrimination.

FOR BETTER REASONS

Compare animals rather than describing them. Use correct names for parts of the cow. Make positive statements. Avoid "I think," "I guess," "maybe," etc. Organize your reasons; complete reasons on one pair before moving to the next. Remember to mention desirable characteristics of lower-placing animals.

DAIRY JUDGING TERMS

Commendable terms are: more alert; wider muzzle; stronger jaws; straighter topline; stronger loin; wider rump; more nearly level rump; higher thurls; smoother tailhead; straighter legs; longer, thinner neck; sharper withers; more open rib; flatter thighs; wider chest; deeper rib; greater spring of rib; deeper bodied; balance of udder; higher, wider rear udder; stronger fore attachment; fuller forequarters; more pliable udder; symmetrically placed teats.

Terms of criticism are: plain head; Roman nose; narrow muzzle; weak jaws; weak loin; weak crops; sloping rump; low thurls; narrow at pins; cow hocks; sickle hocks; puffy hocks; weak pasterns; shallow heels; thick thighs; narrow chest; lacks spring of rib; shallow bodied; round bodied; pendulous udder; short fore udder; tilted udder; loose fore udder; narrow rear udder; low rear udder attachment; fore teats too far apart; teats too close.

SAMPLE SET OF DAIRY JUDGING REASONS

"I placed this class of (name of breed) cows 1, 3, 4, 2. One has more scale with greater length of body than 3. She is straighter in topline with a stronger loin and a more nearly level rump which is higher at the thurls, wider at the pins, and smoother in the tail setting. She is deeper in the chest with greater spring of fore rib. She is sharper in the withers with smoother blending of shoulders with the body. Her udder is higher and wider in rear attachment and shows more quality."

"Three is a straighter cow with more strength and capacity than 4. She is stronger in the back than 4 who breaks between chine and loin. She is deeper in fore ribs and wider in the chest. She has greater spring of both fore and rear rib. Her hind legs are straighter than 4, who is sickle hocked. I grant that 4 excels 3 in dairy character, with sharper withers and more open rib. Her rear udder is fuller, with higher attachment."

"Four excels 2 in dairy character, body capacity, and balance of udder. Her head shows more breed character, is stronger in the jaws, and wider in muzzle. Her neck is longer and her withers are sharper. She has greater depth in both chest and barrel. She is fuller in forequarters with teats more squarely placed. I grant that 2 is stronger in the loin and fuller in the crops than 4. Her rump is more nearly level, being higher at both thurls and pins."

"Two is an easy bottom, as she lacks the dairy character, depth of body, and balance of udder of the other cows in this class."

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